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SPIRITUALITY - A year after a Spirituality Committee was established to investigate the spiritual needs of the Cambodian Church and in what ways the Society of Jesus can respond to these needs, the Jesuits in Cambodia are exploring spirituality as their new ministry.

The committee, composed of Jesuit Fathers Kang Ingun, Rudy Chandra, Gabriel Lamug-Nanawa, and John Mace, met several times last year to reflect on their context and to discern appropriate responses.

One result of this meet was the decision to offer two retreats – an individually directed silent retreat for young adults, held over a weekend in March, and an 8-day preached retreat for religious sisters in the third or fourth quarter of 2015.

The March retreat in Siem Reap was planned for 10 lay collaborators, but only four were able to make it. All four have been involved with MAGIS activities in various ways. Ms Phon Sonai, who works in Xavier Jesuit School, has been involved since the beginning of MAGIS Cambodia in 2007. Mr Ly Sovanna, Director of Catholic Social Communications in Cambodia joined the Solidarity Trip to Korea in 2013, Ms Nob Samnang was one of three delegates to MAGIS and World Youth Day in Brazil in 2013, and Ms Lin Phanny participated in the MAGIS program with Sogang University students in January.

The retreat was a very enriching experience for the participants and the three Jesuit directors, all of whom are members of the Spirituality Committee.

Days after the retreat, Sovanna wrote to the committee, "I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to join the silent retreat in Siem Reap. For me it was really fruitful for my life and faith. Thanks for helping me to find out more about myself, to see so much gifts that I have received from God. Thank you very much!"

The committee still discussing whether such retreat for lay collaborators should be offered again next year, agreed that based on this positive experience, spirituality appears to be an apostolate which the Jesuits in Cambodia can provide as a service to their lay friends and religious collaborators.

In his letter announcing the committee in May 2013, Father Oh In-don SJ, the Delegate of the Korean Provincial to the Cambodia Mission, had said that with this committee, "we are entering a new phase of serving the Cambodian Church".

Many Jesuits in Cambodia were already giving retreats and engaged in dialogues of various kinds; Father Oh had urged them to share their work with the committee so that the Cambodia Mission can build upon this foundation. He specially commended Father Tae-jin's translation works on biographies and spiritual exercises.

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